

Shmanners 349: Sommeliers

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: Welcome back to the mainland.

Teresa: Here we are.

Travis: We're back. This is the new world. I call it America.

Teresa: [laughs] Have you experienced any land sickness?

Travis: Uh, not land sickness. I don't get seasick, but there's been a lot of, like, "Whoa!" [laughs]

Teresa: Yeah. Where you feel like you're still on the ocean, but you are not. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Well, it's like you walk around so much and your inner ear is trying to, like, shift and compensate, and your legs get used to, like, kind of compensating. And then you get on dry land and you're like, "Oh, the world is moving. Oh, my, my, my." But we're back now.

Teresa: That happened to me a little bit yesterday. I mean the day before. I mean, you know, when we got back.

Travis: Yeah. It's trailing off for me now, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally.

Travis: But we're back. It was another great JoCo Cruise.

Teresa: So much fun. So much friends.

Travis: Wonderful people. We did a great show. Did a Shmammers, and then we guested, which you'll get to hear later, uh, on the Avatar podcast, Braving the Elements.

Teresa: Oh my gosh. We played a little, like, newlywed game on there, and it was so much fun!

Travis: Or as Janet Varney called it, oldyweds.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause we're old—we've been married for a while. Uh, and yeah, it was great, man. It was wonderful. I had a great time. I got food poisoning. Not from the cruise.

Teresa: Not from the cruise!

Travis: 'Cause I made some bad food choices and I ate oysters at a questionable restaurant.

Teresa: Listen. I am not going to razz you about that, because we were in Florida. We could literally see the water.

Travis: And it was a seafood restaurant, yeah.

Teresa: It was a seafood restaurant. It should have been fine.

Travis: It was just a seafood restaurant basically in the equivalent of a Bass Pro Shop. That's—it was called Outdoor Worlds.

Teresa: [laughs] Do you think that it's wise to tell people this?

Travis: That I got food poisoning from making bad food choices?

Teresa: [laughs] No, at a specific place.

Travis: Hmm. Ehh, don't—don't look it up, folks. But maybe don't eat oysters there.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Everything else was great. But we're back now. And I'm really looking forward to talking about this episode.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: We're talking about sommeliers.

Teresa: Yes. I—

Travis: I wanted to say it once before you said it a thousand times.

Teresa: A thousand times. Um, we are talking about sommeliers. And the thing is, there's a lot. A lot. A lot about it. Um, we've been to wine tastings and we've talked about wine tastings. We've talked about beer tastings. Have we talked about whiskey tastings? I think we have.

Travis: I'm sure we have, yeah.

Teresa: I'm sure that we have. Um, and it is something that if you imbibe, I mean, I'm sure that there are tastings of other things that are nonalcoholic that one can go to.

Travis: Sure! A chocolate... chocolate tastings?

Teresa: Oh, that's right.

Travis: I guarantee. Uh, coffee tastings.

Teresa: Coffee tastings.

Travis: Umm... water tastings.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: Do you think people do that with, like, different bottles of water? I don't know.

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: Now, I'm curious—I'm—[crosstalk]—

Teresa: We do recommend the process. It is enjoyable. Especially if you are led through it by someone who knows what they're doing.

Travis: Now, here's what I'll say. Here's what I'll say. I'm a bit of a skeptic.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: When it comes to people who are like, "It has notes of this, and this, and this, this." Right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Where it's like, I don't know, maybe you tasted that. But, like, my tongue didn't ta—whatever.

Teresa: I think that there are certain things that you can distinguish, like pepper, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Peppery.

Travis: But my point is, I'm saying even if you're a skeptic about it, going through the process of a tasting where someone's like, "You might detect this, and this, and this," is still fun. Like, it's still a fun thing to do even if you're like, "I don't taste that at all. But sure! Sounds great."

Now, I'll say this, and I've been trying to think of a way to say it that doesn't sound like a euphemism.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But your parents are wine enthusiasts.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Which...

Teresa: They are. They are.

Travis: Yes. Do they—are they able to do the, like, take a sip of it and be like, "Ah, cherries and dirt."

Teresa: I... I think that there are certain wines that they tend to drink from—okay. So, they have a specific winery that they patronize very often out in Oregon, right? And I think with those wines, they are able to talk about those things, because they drink so much of it, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And that is really what you need to do in order to be able to talk about it that way. You really have to taste it a lot, um, and be familiar with—and we'll talk about this—be familiar with the type of grape, and the climate of the winery, and the region, and the soil, and, like, it is specific, right? And do I think that my parents could do that with any wine? No. [laughs] Do I think that maybe one or two wines from that specific vineyard, could they do? Sure.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Sure. Um, but here are the things that, um, that a sommelier... sommelier...

Travis: Sommelier?

Teresa: Sommelier. Oh, man. It is hard to look at this word and say it and think about—

Travis: Sommelier.

Teresa: —how many times I'm gonna have to say it. Um, so they—

Travis: Well, what you should definitely do is get in your head about it.

Teresa: [through laughter] Get in my head about it. [inhales] Um, so these beverage experts often know things about, like I said, the region the grapes, for wine sommeliers especially, were grown in. What kind of barrels they might have been packaged in, what kind of—

Travis: Donkey Kong barrels.

Teresa: Hmm, delicious!

Travis: Hmm! Ah, you can really taste the ape.

Teresa: [laughs] What kind of, uh, of food might pair best with similar notes. And I'm not just talking white or red. Right?

Travis: Ugh, of course not.

Teresa: Of course not.

Travis: Ugh! Can you imagine? How droll. [fake laughter]

Teresa: Here are the things that actually make someone a beverage expert.

Travis: Okay. Or, as we call it in the business, bev-ex.

Teresa: Bev-ex. Do we—does anyone—I've never heard that.

Travis: It's easier to say than sommelier.

Teresa: [through laughter] I guess that's true. Some people are self-taught. People who've done a lot of rigorous studying on their own, or have maybe grown up alongside their libation of choice. There are famous brewing families all over the world. For example, the Antinori family are some of the most famous Italian winemakers in the entire world. They have a Florentine winemaking tradition, and can be traced all the way back to the early 1200's.

Travis: Ooh! That's a while ago.

Teresa: Yes. Yes it is. Um, and in that way, you can probably become an expert in everything from, like, moonshine to tea, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: If you grow up with it long enough. And, I mean, the experience is what helps make you an expert in it.

Travis: Now, but is there a difference between, like, if I devoted the next, like, ten years, right? To studying wines and, like, memorizing stuff and learning stuff, can I call myself a sommelier?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: There are people who have done that, right? Not—

Travis: Liars.

Teresa: —call themselves a sommelier—[laughs]

Travis: Liars and cheats!

Teresa: But devoted themselves. For example, there is a pure leaf tea master named Alex White who underwent two years of vigorous training, which involved traveling to different tea estates so he could learn not only how to prepare the tea leaves but properly take care of them. Brewmasters of beer are similar in this way, right? They might specialize in chemistry or engineering beforehand, and then they know what goes into making a perfect pint.

So the phrase "sommelier" literally means wine steward.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And it is given to people who are experts in wine, but, you know, the public consciousness kind of expanded sommelier to mean beverage expert in whatever, a blank sommelier. Beer sommelier, tea sommelier, all that kind of stuff.

Travis: Yeah, but do you need, like, accreditation?

Teresa: Yes. So, a Master Sommelier is someone who has gone through the rigorous, rigorous exam process.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: At, like, the DMV or something?

Teresa: [laughs] So, the exam consists of three parts. The theory, the service, and the tasting.

Travis: Ooh! I like—can I just say, I'm a sucker for when it's, like, article—you know, like, the something. And it's, like, capitalized, and it's like, "Ooh! That—oh, it's so definitive and so—ooh!"

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Here's something very interesting.

Travis: Oh, good.

Teresa: Uh, the exam that I am talking about is the highest achievement in the world of wine. The exam has been in effect for over 40 years, and in that time less than 300 people have earned the diploma.

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: 269 people, to be exact.

Travis: Nice! Nice, nice, nice, nice, nice. Maybe I'll be the 270th.

Teresa: Uhh, maybe?

Travis: I haven't—now, listen. I haven't studied at all.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I have not done any research. But my brain is such that literally as soon as you're like, "In 40 years, like, less than 300 people." I'm like, "Well, I bet I could. Based on what, you ask? Hubris? Privilege? Audacity?"

Teresa: Audacity. [laughs]

Travis: Some combination of those three things. Where I'm just like, "Yeah. Why wouldn't I be able to pass it?"

Teresa: I mean, for reference there are more Olympic gold medalists than there are Master Sommeliers.

Travis: Well. Look out, world. 'Cause your next one's sitting right here. And now I know what you're thinking. "Travis, are you gonna practice a bunch and study a bunch to get there?" No. I'm gonna rely on my charm, my street smarts, my wits, and I'm gonna make it through with the heart of a champion.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Sure.

Travis: Is the test free to take? Sorry—

Teresa: [simultaneously] No.

Travis: Oh, then never mind.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Let's go through the different tests. Okay. So, the theory. It is dedicated to comprehensive knowledge of wine laws and their regions.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I know that that sounds simple. But regions become subregions become districts become villages.

Travis: Yeah, become subatomic particles.

Teresa: And you have to know about all of them. Like, there is no "Study this one this year." You need to know about all of them. From the past and from the present.

Travis: And the future. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: I mean, maybe!

Travis: [gasps] You need to know who's gonna get pregnant before it happens in that village.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hey, did you taste this vintage yet? What is that, I've ta—oh. That's—she's, uh—the vintner's wife was negative three months pregnant. That's how you get those notes.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, you need a basic understanding of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and Hungarian.

Travis: Oh, I don't think I have any of those?

Teresa: Nope. You don't.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and you also need to know which years were better for which regions.

Travis: That's a lot.

Teresa: It is a lot. Master Sommelier Christopher Bates explains that this portion of the test requires a lifetime of knowledge.

Travis: Aww, man.

Teresa: He told Forbes: "While many questions may seem simple on their own, it is really about the amount of information needed to correctly answer one question."

He goes on to explain, "For example, if a question was asked about the location of a village in Germany, knowing where that one village is located is a very small part of the preparation for that question. To be sure that I get that one question correct, I have to learn about every major wine-producing village in Germany, broken down by region, in order from North to South and East to West, with the two or three most important villages in each. And in order to be able to recall that information on demand, I had to learn to draw a map from memory of every wine-growing region in the country."

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: "All for the sake of being able to answer one or two questions that, out of context, may not have seemed all that hard." Whew!

Travis: Can you imagine doing that and then you're, like, a sommelier at a restaurant and someone's like, "Does that one have a kangaroo on the label?"

And you're like, "What?"

Like, "I'll just take that one. What's your second cheapest? Not the cheapest one. Your second cheapest."

Teresa: [laughs] The second cheapest.

Travis: "Man, I can draw a map from memory of all the ones in Germany."

"No, that's cool, that's cool. You got any blueberry wine?"

"Oh my god."

Teresa: Oh man. I have tried blueberry wine.

Travis: Meh.

Teresa: I don't like it. [laughs]

Travis: Now, hold on. It's really good if you mix blueberry wine and almond sparkling, and it tastes like a blueberry muffin.

Teresa: It does.

Travis: Highly recommend.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That—saying that out loud made me feel like a teenager who's like, "I don't know, man, but I like to pour sugar in it."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That is the first time—first time I ever had wine, red wine, um, Brent, my roommate in college, was in a play where they had, like, shaved his head and he had grown a full beard and he looked very old, right? And so he put glasses and he was like, "I'm gonna go to the liquor store and buy beer."

Hey, listen. Now I'm an adult. Don't.

Teresa: [laughs] Don't do that.

Travis: But he did. He asked me, 'cause it was my 20th birthday, and he was like, "What would you like?"

And I was like, "Uh, red wine."

He was like, "What kind?"

I was like, "I don't know."

So he bought some red wine and I poured it in a glass. We didn't have a bottle—didn't have, like, a corkscrew, so I tried to make one out of, uh, a coat hanger, wire coat hanger rack that I wrapped around a pencil to make a corkscrew shape. Didn't work. Just ended up with a bunch of cork in the wine. I took a sip and I was like, "Oh, I hate this," and poured sugar in it.

Teresa: [laughs] Then it tasted like communion wine.

Travis: Yeah, with hunks of cork in it. I was picking them out of my teeth.

Teresa: Guh-ross.

Travis: Look at me now, world!

Teresa: [laughs] So to give you a little bit of background on Christopher Bates, who said all of that about all of that... exhausting. But he earned his Master Sommelier diploma in 2013, and before that he attended an Ivy League school and graduated in less than four years.

Travis: Studying wine? Is that, like, a thing?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. And it took him four attempts to pass the test.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: That's just the theory part. Next is the service exam.

Travis: Okay. I can't wait to hear all about it. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

Teresa: Alright!

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week we're sponsored by Zola.

Teresa: Ohh, we love Zola.

Travis: Zola. Oh, Zola. Let me count the ways.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So many ways. You know, when you're getting married, it's not just the big day. There's so much leading up to it. There's so much after it.

Teresa: It really is a task.

Travis: Yeah. It's about all the amazing days on the way there. From, uh, proposals, to book the venues, gotta print the invites. You have to climb the highest mountain to find the brightest ruby. All that stuff, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it's the kind of thing where... in our experience I remember it being like, "Well, it's done, right?" Like, "Well, did you do this?" "Oh, okay. We'll do that. Now it's done, right?" "Well, did you do this?" "Uhh... "

So it's wonderful, wonderful. Now Zola has free planning tools that are there for you on your important days. They show you where to start, help plan every step along the way, they have venues and vendors listed, save-the-dates and invites to choose from, free wedding websites and an amazing registry all designed by wedding experts for couples like you. And I'm pointing in general to people listening.

Teresa: That would've been really nice, 'cause I carried around a very beat-up spiral notebook.

Travis: That I still have, by the way.

Teresa: [gasps] You do?

Travis: Yes, 'cause I love you. The Zola community is your place to share, celebrate, and vent with other engaged couples who know exactly what you're going through. And if you need expert help, and you [unintelligible], there's Team Z, which is Zola's wedding advisers, ready to answer your questions. So from just engaged to the only thing left to do is say "I do," Zola is here for all the days along the way. Just go to Zola.com/shmanners. That's Zola.com/shmanners.

I also want to tell about Sinnamon Camelian. And it's not spelled at all the way you think. Not at all! It's S-I-N-N-A-M-O-N C-A-M-E-L-I-A-N. Sinnamon is a writer, and they have written sometimes cutesy, sometimes trashy sci-fi fantasy and contemporary romance books. You'll get a kick out of titles like *A Trashy Pirate Romance*, *Sugarplum Tea*, and *A Trashy Christmas Romance*.

Teresa: It takes all kinds.

Travis: I love it. It's available on Amazon, Smashwords, Nook, Kobo, Apple Books, and more. That's Sinnamon with an S. Grow your love. Thank you, Sinnamon, for having sponsored the show. Make sure you check that out wherever it sounds like you find ebooks.

[restaurant kitchen ambiance plays in the background]

Speaker 1: [distantly] Two Oh No Ross and Carrie's, three Beef and Dairy all day.

Speaker 2: Max Fun Drive! Hey, chef. We got another one!

Speaker 3: Another Max Fun Drive!

[ding]

Speaker 3: People know it's the best time to support the shows they love. You tell 'em how meetup day is back?

Speaker 2: Sure did. They wanted to know about the livestreams, though.

Speaker 3: Those are finishing up right now. We can even send one out on the first night, March 20th.

Speaker 1: March 20th, chef!

Speaker 2: I'll give him a heads up. They also wanted the limited time thank you gifts for new and upgrading members.

Speaker 3: Yep, and we got some fresh episodes ready to go, too.

Speaker 4: Hot stuff, comin' through!

Speaker 2: Alright! We got exciting livestreams, meetup day, fresh episodes, limited time gifts—oh, and BoCo!

Speaker 3: Yeah, um, okay. Let 'em know that Max Fun Drive 2023 will be ready on, um... March 20th. And it'll only be two weeks.

Speaker 4: Two weeks, chef!

Speaker 2: Max Fun Drive starts on March 20th for just two weeks... no problem.

Speaker 1: Order up!

Speaker 2: Shoot, I forgot their water!

[glasses clink]

[ad ends]

[music plays]

Griffin: And now, a live reading from Rachel's poetry corner.

Rachel: Elephants, theremins, Clifton. Neopets, pore strips, Jepson. Heinz smell, jelly beans, goalie goals. Skittles, squirrels, and the mole. Celery, chopsticks, pumpernickel. "A Case of You" by Joanie Mitchell. Lullabies, tie-dye, the more you know. All of these things on our wonderful show.

Griffin: All these things and more wait for you on Wonderful! Every Wednesday on Maximumfun.org, or wherever your download podcasts.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. Now, where were we?

Teresa: We were onto the second part of the Master Sommelier exam called the service exam. It's a little—it's probably the most... I don't know.

Travis: Technical?

Teresa: No, actually the opposite. It's a little bit bizarre, okay? Um, because they set up a mock restaurant, and you have to show an example of a cool, calm, professional and collected person in this kind of cosplay environment. [laughs quietly]

Travis: That's so funny. They do that in Parks & Rec.

Teresa: They do! I remember that.

Travis: Ben Wyatt—Craig wants to do it and they're like, talking about putting ice in the wine and, like—

Teresa: Well, because April Ludgate just crashes it, right?

Travis: Well, no, 'cause they're trying to see if he'll keep his temper while being the thing. He's like, "Ah, if you'll excuse me." And then he steps into, like, the soundproof thing and screams and bunch. And then comes back and makes recommendations.

Teresa: So the point of this obviously is for the adjudicators to have a chance to grade you how you perform under pressure, just like they did in that episode. Um, and high end restaurant service can be very, very pressured.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You know, you want to be informative but not didactic. Are you able to pair the wine that they picked for the first course? During the first course, you know, are you able to pair that with suggestions for the main course? Are you able to remain calm when somebody asks for something ridiculous like ice in their wine? Things like that, right?

Travis: Hey, listen. If you're listening and you're like, "I put ice in my wine." You do you. Don't listen to me.

Teresa: You know what you should do, though?

Travis: What?

Teresa: Is you should freeze some of your wine ahead of time—

Travis: Oh, get out of town!

Teresa: —and put that in your wine after you've frozen it—

Travis: [simultaneously] Welcome to Life Hacks.

Teresa: —so that you don't water down your wine.

Travis: There it is.

Teresa: Or maybe you do want to water down your wine.

Travis: Who knows?!

Teresa: And that's fine too.

Travis: It takes all kinds! That's what I'm saying. Different strokes for different folks.

Teresa: I've heard of people who freeze grapes. Like, you know, if you have white wine you freeze green grapes, or if you have red wine—

Travis: What about hot grapes?

Teresa: [through laughter] Hot grapes—[wheezes] No! No hot grapes. That's a MBMBaM reference. I'm so sorry.

Travis: What?

Teresa: Shmanners Fanners.

Travis: Don't—[gasps] How dare you?

Teresa: Maybe they don't listen to MBMBaM.

Travis: Well, then I'm giving them a little free taste.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Just a taste!

Teresa: Just like a wine tasting.

Travis: Just like a wine tasting!

Teresa: Um, so... maybe it's also important that you have an experience of a belligerent customer so that you can figure out how you might address the situation and, you know, all of the interactions, like figuring out how to...

Travis: Diffuse?

Teresa: Like I said, like, cosplay at a beautiful restaurant that you might be hired to.

Travis: Well, because let's not lose sight of the fact that at the end of the day, you're still giving alcohol to people. So the chance of there being some belligerence on the rise? Not out of the question!

Teresa: Certainly. The third one, which I think is the most just, like, ephemeral, right?

Travis: This is the tasting?

Teresa: This is the tasting one. I feel like... certainly I said at the beginning that there are certain sensations that you can peg on a wine, right? Like peppery, I think that you can think about pepper and think about a wine that you've had and be like, "Oh, yeah. That's a peppery wine." Or fruit, right? Maybe you—

Travis: I mean, sweet, right?

Teresa: Sweet.

Travis: Sweet is one where it's like, okay, yeah, sure.

Teresa: Yeah. But there's also, like, dry, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, okay. So... you have a blind tasting of three white wines and three red wines.

Travis: And one glass of poison.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Choose wisely.

Teresa: Iocaine powder.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, but really—

Travis: Hey, here's a twist, folks. Watch out! The iocaine's in all of them! That's a little spoiler from Master Sommelier Travis McElroy.

Teresa: [laughs] But really, they could be from anywhere, from any time, in all of history.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: I mean, some bottles are really old. I wonder if they would waste those, like...

Travis: No.

Teresa: ... heirloom bottles on these things.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Uh, so that breaks down in the time that you have to do it to four minutes and three seconds per wine.

Travis: Wow! It's a timed event!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and you have to describe the structure, the body, the alcohol, right? The climate the wine is from...

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: ... whether it's New World or Old World—and we'll talk about that in part two—um, possible varietals, possible age range, and then you have to say what you think the wine is.

Travis: Wow, okay! That's a lot.

Teresa: Yeah. Do you remember the Bob's Burgers episode on the wine train?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I...

Travis: It's a classic.

Teresa: It's a classic. And I am reminded of the blind tasting where... [laughs] Bob is like, "Is it red?"

And Linda's like, "No... " [laughs]

He ends up winning it because she gives him the wine from the spit bucket.

Travis: That's correct. 'Cause they got drunk after watching sideways and did it on a dare before, so he knew what it was.

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: Now, let me ask you this.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: How far do you think—if I said, "Here's a blind taste test," right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I gave you a glass of wine, how far down the line do you think you could get, breaking it down?

Teresa: I think that I could tell you whether... I don't know if I could tell you if it was red or white.

Travis: Really!

Teresa: But I do think I could tell you whether it was dry, or... what's the opposite of the dry?

Travis: Wet.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Is it a wet wine? This is a moist wine!

Teresa: Or whether it was sweet. Is it dry or sweet? I think it is.

Travis: I don't know, man.

Teresa: I think dry or sweet. And I could probably tell you, uh...

Travis: You don't think you could tell the difference between red and white?

Teresa: I don't think I could! If I was blindfolded?

Travis: Yeah! I'm pretty confident I could.

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: We might have to do this. Like, oh, maybe we should do a wine tasting for the live stream, for Max Fun Drive.

Teresa: Oh, for the bonus content. That's a great idea! Yeah.

Travis: Yeah. I was gonna do a baking thing but now I kinda want to do this and see how far we can get.

Teresa: Let's—we'll run it past Amanda.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: You could definitely tell if it was sparkling, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah, you could tell if it was sparkling.

Teresa: I could probably tell if it was citrus, right? 'Cause that kind of, like, lemony or lime or, you know, that sparkles on the tongue, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Is that what people say? [wheezes]

Travis: Yeah. Sparkles on the tongue.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Just like in Twilight.

Teresa: What?

Travis: The vampires sparkle?

Teresa: Oh! Their tongues aren't spar—I've never seen it.

Travis: I don't know! I don't know how many times it's spent—probably at least once in Twilight with their tongue just hanging out, right? It's gotta happen at least once.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright.

Travis: "I'm a vampire! Ughhhh."

Teresa: "Bleh." So, for example, the 43 slot rubric from 2017, which is available on Master Sommelier... hrm. Hrm!

Travis: Yeah, it got you!

Teresa: Available on Master Sommelier—Somme—oh my god!

Travis: You're leaving—you're leaving out a syllable!

Teresa: Ugh!

Travis: Master Sommelier.

Teresa: Master Sommelier. Dot com. Dot org.

Travis: You're doing it too fast! You're doing it too fast. Dot gov.

Teresa: Bl-bl-bl-bl-blah.

Travis: Mastersommelier.gov.

Teresa: [laughs] No, dot org!

Travis: Dot pizza.

Teresa: Stop it. Okay. Six categories: sight, nose, palate... uh—

Travis: Sound. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Initial conclusions, final conclusions. There's two palate, because one for flavor notes and the other for bitterness and tannins.

Travis: Of course.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Of course. Biff—Biff Tannins.

Teresa: Biff Tannins. [laughs]

Travis: How are the Biff Tannins on this one?

Teresa: Man! I mean, I definitely couldn't do that.

Travis: No!

Teresa: I could not.

Travis: I could—I mean, I don't—can I be honest with you? I'm almost 40 and I've drank wine all my life. I don't know what a tannin is.

Teresa: I don't know either.

Travis: I don't know!

Teresa: Is it something—I think that's the thing that they talk about gives you headaches afterwards?

Travis: I don't know, man! I have no—I... I don't know if it's a solid, a liquid. Is it—what is—

Teresa: It's a particle. [laughs]

Travis: It's a particle? So you have, like, electrons...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You have protons, you have tannins.

Teresa: Oh, this is off the rails. Okay. Um, and so you have to complete all three of the exam, and then will you earn the rank. And so, like, it's each separate—it's like, three tests so it's not like, "Oh, well, I did great on this section and that makes up for the other section that I struggle with." No, no, no. You have to—

Travis: [simultaneously] Oh, okay. You have to pass each.

Teresa: You have to pass each. And you have three years to pass all three parts, and if you don't succeed within the three years, you have to start over again with all three sections. That's like when I lost my driver's license for a little bit. I—I ran out—

Travis: Because you physically lost it?

Teresa: No, no, no.

Travis: Or did someone take it away from you?

Teresa: No, I ran out the time of my learner's permit.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: I had my—

Travis: You said you lost your license and I was like, was there a time in your life where they were like, "No, no, no. You can't drive."

Teresa: [laughs] "You can't have this back."

Travis: "You can't drive anymore."

Teresa: No, I waited too long to take my driver's test, so I had to retake the learner's permit test the day before so that I could retake—so I could take the driver's license—

Travis: Not nearly as dramatic as it sounded at first.

Teresa: Sorry.

Travis: 'Cause I know your driving record and I know that wasn't it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Unless there was a time in your life that you have kept secret from me where you were out there just joyriding and doing donuts. Were you?!

Teresa: I think I've done donuts once.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So this is completely off topic, and don't do this, friends. My friend in college and I used to play hands and feet.

Travis: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: So one of us would be the feet and the other one would be the hands. In the—

Travis: Of the steering wheel.

Teresa: Of the steering wheel.

Travis: Yeah. When I—

Teresa: Don't do that.

Travis: —when I got a new car—

Teresa: It's bad.

Travis: Hey, also don't do this. When I got a new car, it was my first car, and Griffin was driving with me and we were, like, on a back road in Huntington, and I was like, "I want to see how fast I can go," and I just

gunned it. And the car—the speedometer maxed out at 120, and I only got up to 106 before Griffin's screaming convinced me to slow down, but I think I could've gotten 120.

Teresa: Oh man.

Travis: Now, it was a Hyundai Elantra, which I think if it had gone to 120 it would've just fallen apart at the seams.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. So... there are also rules on—

Travis: Don't do that by the way. I can't stress enough!

Teresa: Don't do that! Don't do any of those things!

Travis: None of things.

Teresa: These are terrible.

Travis: We're parents now. Don't do these things.

Teresa: Uh, there are rules on how you prepare. For example, you're never allowed to discuss specific questions with other candidates, only preparations, right? So you can only say "I prepared this thing and that thing," and...

Travis: "I have a trifold foam core board."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: "Where I've put 'What are grapes?' on, and I'm really hoping—"

Teresa: Um, and—

Travis: "I made a wine volcano."

Teresa: The usually recommend that you do this with the community behind you, right? So, like, you should have a mentor, you should have a

small study group, you should have a profession that allows you to be around wine as often as possible. Um, because without complete immersion it's nearly impossible to pass the exam.

Travis: Okay. Let me pitch this, right? And if this movie doesn't already exist, I'll eat my hat.

I'm not wearing a hat. I apologize. I ate it earlier.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But a movie in which it's, like, small town dive bar bartender who dreams of being a Master Sommelier. And he's, like, studying in the small town to, like, study for this test. And it's, like—he's, like, doing wine tastings at this, like, small town dive bar. And, like, people are like, "Okay, man. Yeah, whatever you say." And they're, like, doing one of the wine tastings with him and stuff, and it's all about him, like, studying for this test and trying to become a Master Sommelier in this small town dive bar. Right?

Teresa: Write that movie.

Travis: That's a good idea!

Together: TM, TM, TM, TM, TM.

Teresa: Okay. So, uh, remember Christopher Bates from earlier?

Travis: Yes I do.

Teresa: He estimated that he invested well over \$30,000 into testing fees and travel. He says, "Just taking the exam is 3 or 4,000 bucks with travel costs and time off work."

Travis: Whew!

Teresa: "But that does not include the thousands of dollars spent on wine for ongoing blind tastings prior to the test."

Travis: Wild.

Teresa: Whew! So.

Travis: But you also have to think, with—

Teresa: That's why.

Travis: —with less than 270 people, right? Passing in 40 years. If you pass, the, like, you are writing your own ticket, right? Like, if you're one of the less than 300 people who is classified as a Master Sommelier, you're paid, right? You're getting that money.

Teresa: I mean, you basically just have to walk into a high end restaurant of your choosing with your little certificate and say, "Pay me... "

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: "Pay me, what? 250k a year."

Travis: It's gotta be ridiculous, right?

Teresa: I don't know if that's a relative... how much that is for a sommelier.

Travis: I'll bet it's more than that.

Teresa: You could probably just ask for as much as you want.

Travis: Yeah, right? You got—maybe I should become a master—[laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. So, next week we will talk about some ways to implement some cool tips from wine and beverage experts without dropping that 30 grand on the terrifying exam. Okay?

Travis: I mean, unless you—if you want to give us 30 grand to listen to the episode, it's not a requirement in any way, and I don't even know how you

would get it to us. I guess we have a PO Box. Hey, don't send 30 grand through the mail. I can't—

Teresa: Don't do that. Is that legal?

Travis: [sighs] I don't know about legal, it just doesn't seem like a good idea!

Teresa: It doesn't.

Travis: Unless it's in pennies. Take that, government. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Don't do that to the post office.

Teresa: The post office is an independent government agency.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So you're not stickin' it to anybody.

Travis: Okay. Don't do that. Don't do that. Um, okay. So I want to tell you some exciting announcement before we wrap up. First off, if you're listening to this on Friday, then the My Brother, My Brother, and Me virtual live show is tonight!

Teresa: Including Sawbones!

Travis: But even if you're not listening to it on Friday, video on-demand is still available for two weeks, so you can still watch it if you go to bit.ly/mcelroytours. You can watch it there. Tickets are only \$10, so why would you not?

Teresa: And you're getting two shows for \$10, so basically you're losing money if you don't buy a ticket.

Travis: That's a great point. Thanks, babe. That's a great point. It's at 9 PM Eastern Time, March, 17th, like I said. If you're listening to this on Friday, it's tonight. Also, we've got new tour dates for the upcoming year. Tickets go on sale today at noon, local time. So when you're listening to this, they might be out right now. We're going to be in Austin, Texas doing a My Brother, My Brother, and Me at Moontower, the Moontower Festival. We're gonna be in Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee; Raleigh, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; San Diego, California; all kinds of stuff.

Teresa: And some of these are make-up dates, right? So they'll be...

Travis: Well, so the make-up dates is the one in April for San Jose and Denver. And there are still some tickets available for that.

Teresa: So those'll be Fancy Takes Flight.

Travis: Correct. And the rest are Sun and Sea.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right, okay. But you can get all the info on that and get those tickets at bit.ly/mcelroytours. Make sure—we've got our generic podcast merch back in stock over at mcelroymerch.com. Make sure you check that out. And next week is Max Fun Drive, so we're gonna have all kinds of fun events, and livestreams, and...

Teresa: Bonus content.

Travis: Bonus content, rewards for when we hit milestone goals, all kinds of stuff, so make sure you check that out. It's gonna be at Maximumfun.org. And now we want to thank our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. We want to thank our researcher and writer, Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show. And we want to thank you for listening and supporting us. We couldn't make the show without you either, frankly. There, I've said it. I'm not afraid anymore.

Teresa: We also want to say thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are

found. Also thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, join that group today.

As always, we are taking suggestions, questions, just waves at our gmail account, which is shmannerscast@gmail.com. And say hi to Alex, because she reads every one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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